



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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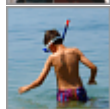


Recent developments

Includes: Aggregate Monthly Hours Worked, Independent Contractors, Labour Force Underutilisation Rate, Employee Earnings and Hours CURF, Extended Labour Force Underutilisation Rate



Articles and analysis



Find out more

Key labour market summary statistics are available in Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0)

About this Release

Labour Statistics News is published twice yearly by the Labour Market Statistics National Statistical Centre (NSC). It provides information about the latest in labour market statistics including: outlining recent developments and survey reviews; informing and seeking feedback on current projects; providing analysis and articles on labour-related issues; providing information on how to find, use and interpret ABS labour market statistics; providing useful contacts within the labour market area of the ABS; highlighting significant releases of ABS labour market data or analysis; and advertising upcoming statistical training in labour market statistics. Labour Statistics News aims to reach a wide range of users to inform and engage with the community on labour market issues and statistical developments.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the second issue of Labour Statistics News. This issue includes information on the latest developments in ABS labour market statistics, updates on current work, and details on changes to the ABS labour work program following the announcement of the Federal budget. It also provides an opportunity for you to give us feedback on these developments so that we can better meet your statistical needs. Labour Statistics News is produced twice a year by the Labour Market National Statistical Centre.

2009 has been a busy year for us, with more to come. Some highlights of the year so far include the release of the first Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH) survey Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF), and the release of new Independent contractor estimates. Our investigations into maximising the longitudinal nature of the Labour Force Survey through matching data across survey months, and options for linked employer-employee data, are also progressing well.

More recently, there have also been a number of important additions to the range of information released in the main labour force publication [Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0), which have been enthusiastically received by labour market analysts. These include:

- the release of a new hours worked series - aggregate monthly hours worked estimates (available as both trend and seasonally adjusted estimates);
- quarterly labour force underutilisation rates; and
- gross flows (labour market transition) estimates.

In other news, the ABS labour statistics program received a boost following the announcement of an increase in funding for the ABS in the Federal Budget. As a result of the increased funding, the full sample for the Labour Force Survey will be restored, and the Job Vacancy Survey will be reinstated.

See the Recent developments and Current projects sections for more details on these, and other developments.

If you are looking to improve your understanding of the wide range of ABS labour statistics, a wealth of information can be found in the compendium publication [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0), in [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](#) (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001) and on the [Labour Theme Page](#) of the ABS website. In addition, the Labour Market National Statistical Centre runs a one day training course, Introduction to Labour Statistics, in partnership with the ABS National Statistical Training Institute, which informs participants of the ABS labour collections and their applications.

If you have any questions about aspects of the labour statistic program, please contact one of our subject experts shown in the [Find out more](#) page of this newsletter, or you can contact us on (02) 6252 7206 or email <labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative.

Michael Gerrity, A/g Director

Labour Market National Statistical Centre

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CURRENT PROJECTS

Labour Market Statistics National Statistical Centre is undertaking a number of development and analytical projects to improve the relevance and reliability of labour market statistics and promote the effective use of these statistics. Current projects provides an overview of this work and contacts for further information.

This section contains the following subsection :

- Re-instatement of the Labour Force Survey sample and the Job Vacancy Survey
- Investigations into making greater use of labour survey data
- Investigation into options for the development of linked employer-employee data
- Major Labour Costs Survey
- Changing the volume measures of labour underutilisation to an August reference period
- Investigation into improved gross flows statistics

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Re-instatement of the Labour Force Survey sample and the Job Vacancy Survey

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RE-INSTATEMENT OF THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY SAMPLE AND THE JOB VACANCY SURVEY

On 13 May 2009, following the Federal budget announcement of an additional \$15m in funding for the ABS, the Australian Statistician announced the full re-instatement of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) sample, and the re-instatement of the Job Vacancy Survey (JVS).

The LFS re-instatement will occur progressively over four reference months, from September to December 2009. The December 2009 estimates, released in January 2010, will be the first under the fully re-instated sample. The reversal of the 24% reduction in sample size is expected to decrease standard errors by approximately 15%.

For more background on the 24% sample reduction, in place from July 2008 to August 2009, refer to the information paper [Labour Force Survey Sample Design, Nov 2007](#) (second edition) (cat. no. 6269.0). Later this year a new edition of this information paper will be released which will discuss the expected sample size, the re-instated sampling fractions, and the impact of the sample re-instatement on labour force estimates and products and on associated surveys.

For more information regarding the LFS sample reinstatement please refer to the information paper or contact Susan Schemen on (02) 6252 5171 or email

<susan.schemen@abs.gov.au>.

The JVS will be re-instated from the November 2009 quarter onwards. The November 2009 results will be released on 4 February 2010. For more information regarding the JVS reinstatement please contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email <bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>.

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INVESTIGATIONS INTO MAKING GREATER USE OF LABOUR SURVEY DATA

The Monthly Population Survey (MPS) provides the ABS with a range of labour and other data on a monthly basis. The MPS comprises the Labour Force Survey and one or more supplementary surveys.

Households in the MPS are interviewed over eight consecutive months forming a matched sample. This matched sample can show month-to-month labour market transitions, such as those released in the Gross Flows datacube (GM1) available in [Labour Force, Australia](#) (6202.0), but it also provides the possibility of producing longer-term transitions. There is also a range of other information collected as part of the MPS in each month, and across different months, which could be used to produce new analytical datasets.

A number of dimensions are currently being explored to make greater use of labour survey data, which include:

- The production of longitudinal Labour Force Survey data.
- The development of family level estimates for the [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership](#) (cat. no. 6310.0) labour force supplementary survey.
- The development of linkages between labour supplementary surveys collected in different months, such as [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership](#) (cat. no. 6310.0), collected annually in August, and [Education and Work](#) (cat. no. 6227.0), collected annually in May.

For more information please contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email <bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>.

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INVESTIGATION INTO OPTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LINKED EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE DATA

A variety of different linked employer-employee datasets have been developed by a range of statistical agencies and central banks across the OECD, but there has been very little information produced in Australia since the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) was last conducted in 1995.

Data which links employers and their employees have enabled researchers abroad to explore a range of employer-employee dynamics which are not possible from separate business-level and person-level datasets. Data in Australia regarding employers (often collected from businesses) are generally unconnected to data on employees (usually collected from individuals using household surveys).

The ABS is currently investigating options for developing linked employer-employee data, some of which involve making additional use of existing survey and/or administrative data, and others which involve data that are not currently available. The ABS expects to have identified a number of potential approaches to linked employer-employee data by the end of 2009. However, any substantial development work on one or more of these options would likely be contingent on receiving additional funding.

For more information please contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email [<bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>](mailto:bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au).

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Major Labour Costs Survey

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MAJOR LABOUR COSTS SURVEY

The ABS has commenced development work on the next Major Labour Costs (MLC) survey which is to be conducted in respect to the 2009-10 financial year. The last MLC survey was conducted in respect of the 2002-03 financial year, with results released in [Labour Costs, Australia](#) (6348.0.55.001).

The MLC survey collects information on a range of labour-related costs incurred by business, such as employee earnings, workers compensation premiums, employer superannuation contributions, payroll tax, and fringe benefits tax. Information is available on the total labour costs as well as labour costs per employee, for a range of business

characteristics (e.g. industry, sector, employer size, and state or territory).

For more information please contact Rachel Green on (02) 6252 7109 or email <rachel.green@abs.gov.au>.

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CHANGING THE VOLUME MEASURES OF LABOUR UNDERUTILISATION TO AN AUGUST REFERENCE PERIOD

Prior to July 2008 the suite of labour underutilisation measures were published annually in respect of September. In July 2008 the ABS announced that the labour force underutilisation rate and its component underemployment rate would move to a quarterly frequency of February, May, August and November.

In the July 2009 issue of [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (ABS cat. no. 6105.0) the ABS announced that the extended labour force underutilisation rate had been revised, in order to have a common reference period with the labour force underutilisation rate. The extended rate is now available in respect of August of each year.

The ABS is currently developing a methodology which will enable the annual volume measures of labour underutilisation to also be produced in respect of August. The volume measures, which provide an alternative perspective on underutilisation from the more common headcount measures, will continue to be released in [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (ABS cat. no. 6105.0) and the revised time series is expected to be released in the October 2009 issue.

For more information please contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email <bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>.

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INVESTIGATION INTO IMPROVED GROSS FLOWS STATISTICS

Households in the Monthly Population Survey are interviewed over eight consecutive months, and people who respond in consecutive months form a matched sample. It is from this matched sample that the ABS can produce Labour Force Survey (LFS) gross flows, which show month-to-month labour market transitions.

Gross flows data is released in Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0) including the gross flows datacube (GM1). The gross flows datacube was previously released in Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001).

Gross flows data is based on a matched sample rather than the full sample, and as a consequence they do not match other published LFS estimates. The ABS is currently investigating methods of ensuring gross flows estimates are consistent with other LFS estimates. It is expected that as a result of this work the gross flows estimates will better represent the Australian population, and provide a better indication of the overall behaviour of the labour market. The ABS is planning to release improved gross flows estimates in early 2010.

For more information please contact Susan Schemen on (02) 6252 5171 or email <susan.schemen@abs.gov.au>.

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Recent Developments highlights some of the latest analysis and new statistical work completed by the Labour Market Statistics National Statistical Centre. This work is aimed at improving the range of labour market statistics available and assisting users in the effective use of these statistics.

This section contains the following subsection :

- Aggregate Monthly Hours Worked

- Independent Contractors

- Labour Force Underutilisation Rate

- Employee Earnings and Hours CURF

Aggregate Monthly Hours Worked

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AGGREGATE MONTHLY HOURS WORKED

On 6 August 2009, the ABS introduced a new measure of hours worked, namely aggregate monthly hours worked, which is the total number of hours actually worked in Australia in a calendar month. This new measure was released in an article [Aggregate Monthly Hours Worked](#) in [Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0). The seasonally adjusted and trend estimates allow a direct time series comparison of the hours worked by Australians.

These new estimates are intended to compliment existing employment and unemployment estimates and assist analysts to understand how the labour market is responding to the current economic challenges. For example, whether employers are reducing employee hours rather than retrenching employees in an attempt to reduce costs.

Currently only the Australia level series has been released. The ABS is investigating the feasibility of producing additional aggregate monthly hours worked series, such as for males and females. The results of this investigation, as well as a summary of the methodology used to calculate the estimates, will be included in [Information Paper: Expansion of Hours Worked Estimates from the Labour Force Survey](#) (cat. no. 6290.0.55.001), which will be released on 8 September 2009.

Aggregate monthly hours worked estimates will be released in [Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0), on an ongoing basis, beginning with the August 2009 issue to be released on 10 September 2009.

For more information please contact Susan Schemen on (02) 6252 5171 or email [<susan.schemen@abs.gov.au>](mailto:susan.schemen@abs.gov.au).

Independent Contractors

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INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

The ABS recently redeveloped the Forms of Employment Survey (FOES), in part, to more precisely measure the number of employed people who work as independent contractors. The latest results (released on the 12 June 2009) indicate that one in ten workers are independent contractors. For more information see [Forms of Employment, Australia](#) (cat. no.

6359.0). The ABS is also expecting to release a Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) from the 2008 FOES in late 2009.

A recent article, [Independent Contractors](#), published in the July 2009 issue of [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0), discusses the characteristics of independent contractors, their working arrangements and conditions of employment, and contrasts these with employees and other business operators.

For more information please contact Michael Gerrity on (02) 6252 5514 or email <m.gerrity@abs.gov.au>.

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LABOUR FORCE UNDERUTILISATION RATE

In the May 2009 issue of [Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0) the ABS included the quarterly labour force underutilisation rate and quarterly underemployment rate. These were previously released in [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0). The extent to which available labour is underutilised is of interest from a number of perspectives. From an economic perspective, there is interest in the amount of spare capacity in the labour supply and its potential to contribute to the production of goods and services. From a social viewpoint, there is concern that people whose aspirations for work are not being met may suffer financially, personally and socially.

This quarterly data will next be available in the August 2009 issue of [Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0), which will be released on 10 September 2009, and additional time series information will also be published.

Recent articles on labour underutilisation, including [Extended labour force underutilisation rate](#), [Historical labour underutilisation](#) and [Underutilisation in the economic downturn](#), can be found in [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0).

For more information please contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email <bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>.

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Employee Earnings and Hours CURF

EMPLOYEE EARNINGS AND HOURS CURF

The Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH) survey provides data on the composition and distribution of employee earnings, the hours they are paid for, and the methods used to set their pay.

The ABS has developed the first Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) for EEH, using data from the 2006 survey. The CURF was released in March 2009. Information on the microdata within this CURF can be found in [Employee Earnings and Hours, Expanded CURF, Technical Manual](#). For more information on CURFs please refer to the [CURF Microdata Entry Page](#).

For more information please contact Michael Gerrity on (02) 6252 5514 or email [<m.gerrity@abs.gov.au>](mailto:m.gerrity@abs.gov.au).

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Extended Labour Force Underutilisation Rate

EXTENDED LABOUR FORCE UNDERUTILISATION RATE

The revised annual extended labour force underutilisation rate was released in the July 2009 issue of [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0). This rate provides the broadest ABS measure of labour underutilisation in Australia. It is now published in respect of August (instead of September) to have a common reference period with the labour force underutilisation rate. The extended labour force underutilisation rate now uses data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), rather than data from both the LFS and the annual Underemployed Workers survey.

The revisions to the extended labour force underutilisation rate are discussed further in the article [Extended labour force underutilisation rate](#), which was published in the July 2009 issue of [Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0).

For more information please contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email [<bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>](mailto:bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au).

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SELECTED RECENT RELEASES

[Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0)

[Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery](#) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

[Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly](#) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)

[Australian Labour Market Statistics](#) (cat. no. 6105.0)

[Average Weekly Earnings, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6302.0)

[Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, Aug 2008](#) (cat. no. 6310.0)

[Microdata: Labour Force Survey and Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Survey, Basic and Expanded CURF, Australia, Aug 2008](#) (cat. no. 6202.0.30.001)

[Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, Aug 2008](#) (cat. no. 6306.0)

[Microdata: Employee Earnings and Hours, Expanded CURF, Australia, May 2006](#) (cat. no. 6306.0.55.001)

[Forms of Employment, Australia, Nov 2008](#) (cat. no. 6359.0)

[Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, Jun 2009](#) (cat. no. 6224.0.55.001)

[Industrial Disputes, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6321.0.55.001)

[Locations of Work, Australia, Nov 2008](#) (cat. no. 6275.0)

[Labour Force Experience, Australia, Feb 2009](#) (cat. no. 6206.0)

[Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia, Sep 2008](#) (cat. no. 6220.0)

[Underemployed Workers, Australia, Sep 2008](#) (cat. no. 6265.0)

[Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia, 2007-08](#) (cat. no. 6523.0)

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ARTICLES AND ANALYSIS

Aggregate Monthly Hours Worked

This article highlights the new measure of hours worked, namely aggregate monthly hours worked, which is the total number of hours actually worked in Australia in a calendar month. The seasonally adjusted and trend estimates allow a direct time series comparison of the hours worked by Australians.

This article was published in the July 2009 issue of Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).

Work and Family Balance

This article looks at work and family balance of employed people who care for children, including their working arrangements, child care arrangements, and perceptions of time stress. The article uses data from the 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS).

This article was published in the April 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

Job Flexibility of Casual Employees

With an increase in the variety of employment other than the 'traditional' arrangement of full-time, ongoing wage or salary jobs with regular hours and paid leave, there is increasing interest in casual employees. This article focuses on aspects of job flexibility for casual employees using data from the 2007 Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS).

This article was published in the April 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

Jurisdictional coverage

This article presents estimates from August 2008 of the proportion of employees in the federal and state workplace relations systems for pay-setting purposes, including the coverage across each of the states and territories, using data from the Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH) survey.

This article was published in the July 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

Independent contractors

With the recent changes in the nature of employment relationships, and the introduction of

new workplace relations and independent contractor legislation, there has been an increased interest in the extent of independent contracting and the working conditions of independent contractors. As a result, the ABS revised the annual Forms of Employment Survey (FOES) to better measure the number of employed people who work as independent contractors. This article provides an overview of the working arrangements and conditions of independent contractors as well as other business operators and employees.

This article was published in the July 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

Interpreting Gross Flows

This article outlines the gross flows data available each month from the Labour Force Survey. This data makes use of the common sample between months to provide an understanding of movements in labour force status.

This article was published in the April 2009 issue of Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).

Historical Labour underutilisation

This article provides analysis of the quarterly labour force underutilisation rate (LFUR) for the time period of February 1978 - May 2009. The LFUR provides a measure of the level of available, but unused, labour within the labour force. This article looks at the difference in labour force underutilisation rates for males and females and for each of the states and territories.

This article was published in the July 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

Underutilisation in the economic downturn

This article highlights recent changes in labour force underutilisation and explores the changes in quarterly unemployment and underemployment for particular populations, in order to identify the underlying trends which have contributed to the recent increases in the labour force underutilisation rate.

This article was published in the July 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

Extended labour force underutilisation rate

ABS extended labour force underutilisation rate (ELFUR) provides the broadest ABS measure of underutilised labour resources in Australia and has been published annually as a companion rate to the labour force underutilisation rate (LFUR). This article provides an outline of the population groups included in the ELFUR, as well as the data source and reference period.

This article was published in the July 2009 issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0).

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About the Labour Market National Statistical Centre

The Labour Market National Statistical Centre is responsible for:

- promoting the effective use of labour market statistics;
- influencing the development of national and international frameworks; and
- improving the relevance and reliability of labour market statistics.

We have three teams who specialise in various aspects of the labour market:

Labour Market Dynamics

The Labour Market Dynamics team specialises in statistics that inform on transitions within the labour market, particularly into and out of employment. The team has a focus on understanding the nature of these transitions and the people who are affected. Please contact Bjorn Jarvis (team leader) on (02) 6252 6552 or email <bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au> if you have any questions relating to transitions, unemployment and underemployment, underutilisation, job search experience, retirement, job vacancies, labour force participation and persons not in the labour force.

Wages and Workplace Relations

The Wages and Workplace Relations team specialises in statistics and statistical measures relating to the nature of employment, such as wages and conditions of employment, employment arrangements, different forms of employment, and workplace relations (bargaining, trade union membership). Please contact Michael Gerrity (team leader) on (02) 6252 5514 or email <m.gerrity@abs.gov.au> if you have any questions in regards to earnings measures and sources (including gender wage issues), independent contracting and other forms of employment, working arrangements, casual employment, trade union membership, and methods of setting pay.

Labour Force Survey Projects

The Labour Force Survey Projects team undertakes research, development and analytical work relating to the design and operation of the monthly Labour Force Survey. Their work is aimed at maintaining the efficiency and relevance of the survey, and at improving the quality and range of data disseminated. Please contact Susan Schemen (team leader) on (02) 6252 5171 or email <susan.schemen@abs.gov.au> if you have any questions about developments relating to the Labour Force Survey.

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Further information

Published information is available free of charge on our website. Where data is not available on our website at the level of detail you require, our team can provide you with customised data to meet your specific requirements. Contact us on (02) 6252 7206 or email <labour.statistics@abs.gov.au> to discuss your data requirements.

All key labour statistical releases and publications can be found at the Labour Releases section of the [Labour Theme Page](#). For help finding and accessing ABS products and services contact the National Information Referral Service on 1300 135 070.

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Introduction to Labour Statistics training course

Introduction to Labour Statistics is a one-day training course run in partnership between the National Statistical Training Institute and the Labour Market National Statistical Centre.

The training course suits people with or without a related academic background, providing an overview of the range of concepts and issues associated with ABS labour statistics. It also explores the data produced by both household and employer based collections, and highlights the range of data available.

Introduction to Labour Statistics training courses are generally held in each state capital during the year.

For more details about this and other statistical training, or to register interest in a course, please refer to the [ABS Training page](#), or contact Bjorn Jarvis on (02) 6252 6552 or email <bjorn.jarvis@abs.gov.au>.



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